



Presidential Management Fellow Matthew Valerius  
Photograph by Bill Moser, U.S. Department of Education

## OVAE Welcomes Matthew Valerius!

Presidential Management Fellow Matthew Valerius recently joined OVAE as a program specialist focusing on community colleges. Valerius recently completed a master of public policy from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota, where he focused on economic development and education policy. There, he was awarded a Humphrey Public Leaders Fellowship and a Walter H. Judd International Graduate Fellowship based on the quality of his academic and professional work. His specialties include econometric analysis, policy analysis and evaluation, project management and language instruction. Prior to joining OVAE, Valerius worked as an Education Policy Consultant with Summit Education Associations, where he managed key aspects of K-12 education reform projects. He also worked with USAID in Guatemala, where he aided a commission from the Guatemalan Ministry of Education in designing and implementing a reform proposal for the country's teacher supervision and support system. For two years he was an Advantage Program coordinator with CommonBond Communities, a nonprofit affordable housing provider based in St. Paul, Minn. In this role, Valerius managed the community resource centers and after-school academic youth programs at two of the organization's affordable housing communities. Upon completing his bachelor's degree at Marquette University, he taught English and Spanish for two years to adult students in Germany.

## Remediation: Higher Education's Bridge to Nowhere

[Complete College America \(CCA\)](#) recently released a scathing [review](#) of developmental education in the United States. Despite its intention to provide an academic bridge for students with poor high school preparation to achieve college readiness, college remediation, as CCA data show, has become a "bridge to nowhere." It is a broken system that shuffles some 1.7 million beginning students each year into developmental education sequences from which few emerge as college graduates. CCA estimates that states and students spent over \$3 billion on developmental education courses last year, with little student success resulting.

The remediation statistics presented show, first, that there are too many entering freshmen in need of remediation. Over 51 percent of students entering a two-year college and nearly 20 percent of those entering a four-year college in fall 2006 enrolled in at least one developmental course. These rates are significantly higher for minority and low-income students. Second, most students referred to a developmental sequence never make it through the subsequent college-level gateway courses, regardless of race, age or income. Of students who began a remediation program at a two-year college, less than a quarter completed all remediation requirements *and* associated college-level gateway courses in two years. Third, CCA notes that fewer than one in 10 students at two-year colleges who take developmental courses graduated within three years. While other research has documented higher completion rates when the timeline is extended to four or six years, the college completion rates for students in remediation programs remain deeply troubling.

CCA acknowledges that much has to be done to improve the quality of K-12 education and ensure that students arrive at postsecondary institutions prepared for college-level courses. However, colleges and universities also have a responsibility to fix the broken developmental education system. Therefore, CCA recommends four reform strategies:

- Align requirements for entry-level college courses with high school graduation requirements to ensure greater college readiness.
- Administer college-ready anchor assessments in high school so students, teachers and parents have a clear understanding of students' progress toward college readiness and can use targeted interventions to help less well-prepared students develop the skills they will need to become college-ready before leaving high school.
- End traditional developmental education and adopt a system where most students begin taking first-year full-credit courses with built-in support for those who need to brush up on certain skills.
- Encourage students to commit to a well-defined program pathway as soon as possible to eliminate excessive course-taking and wandering between programs, thereby reducing the time required to graduate.

CCA reminds us that students pursue postsecondary education for college-level coursework, not more high school courses. We must, therefore, honor their intentions and focus on building a new road to student success and close education's bridge to nowhere for good.